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# BOLSTERING ASEAN'S PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE MECHANISMS FOR NATURAL DISASTERS



*Disaster Monitoring and Response System (DMRS) training at the AHA Center in Jakarta.*

Southeast Asia is one of the most disaster-prone regions in the world. Over the past decade alone, the region has seen massive earthquakes off Indonesia's coastline, major flooding across Thailand, and disastrous typhoons in the Philippines and Myanmar. As urbanization continues and as integration of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Community creates more vigorous cross-border linkages, natural disasters in ASEAN Member States will continue to have broader regional impacts.

To serve as a disaster management coordinating mechanism within the region, ASEAN Member States created the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management (AHA Centre), which allows Member States to combine their resources and jointly undertake disaster management and emergency response efforts in the region. The AHA Centre serves as the sole regional coordinating entity on disaster relief and emergency operations. Being an ASEAN entity allows the AHA Centre to coordinate civilian and military response as well as serving as a trusted repository of data on regional capacities and assets.

Through the ASEAN-U.S. Partnership for Good Governance, Equitable and Sustainable Development and Security (PROGRESS) project, the U.S. Government is supporting ASEAN and the AHA Centre in efforts to mitigate loss from natural disasters through the following initiatives:

- **Develop training curricula on disaster management:** Assist ASEAN to develop a set of standardized training materials on disaster risk reduction across the region, ensuring consistent technical knowledge and tools are shared to prepare for and respond to natural disasters.
- **Develop guidelines for Risk and Vulnerability Assessments:** Provide technical assistance to produce an important tool for identifying vulnerabilities in areas threatened by natural disasters and prioritizing preparedness measures for both people and economic assets.
- **Improve and upgrade the AHA Centre's Disaster Monitoring and Response System:** Provide technical assistance to collect better and more comprehensive meteorological, seismic, and demographic data, and monitor disasters in real-time.
- **Establish an ASEAN Joint Disaster Response Plan:** Support activities to strategize and implement the "One ASEAN One Response" coordinating mechanism with relevant stakeholders and partners.
- **Expand Information Communications Technology (ICT) Solutions for Disasters:** Support activities to explore communication technology options to introduce new and innovative communication systems for use prior, during, and after disasters.

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